

Central MRS Meeting Notes
July 16, 2007
Mocksville Public Library

Counties Present: Alamance, Alexander, Davidson, Davie, Forsyth, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Stanly.

Introductions

News from Raleigh

Automation Update

MRS Institute

WF/CPS Collaboration

Sharing Info

Syncing CP/MRA

Joint Visits

Prevention

CFTs

Culture

News from Raleigh

- Evaluation Issues – Heather reiterated the DCD and Admin letter regarding Social Worker Visits with children. Any questions – contact Heather.
- Mentioned that MRS Institute flyer went out last week. Will try to have all counties there.

WF/CPS Collaboration

We are all in the same agency, but this seems to be hard. When Holly goes to counties and one side of the agency says they are doing ok, the other side of the agency feels that there is room for improvement. Just wanted to talk about why this might be difficult to do and how we can work around this.

Culture

How many people feel that there is a different culture with WF and CPS? What are things that people perceive – regardless if they are true.

- It doesn't seem like there is a real willingness to share information sometimes.
- Some things Holly has noticed:
 - WF usually comes in and goes home at the same time, WF has more office work – some counties do very little home visits.
 - CPS has very varied hours, including lunch hours, is out of the office a lot but frequently work after-hours. Those differences cause resentment
- Big pay difference
- CPS SW have more of a clinical approach (or may be the perception by WF.)
- Mecklenburg is in their 2nd year of being co-located and this has helped them understand each other. In their county WF does home visits.
 - They have done some joint home visits which helps.
- WF more willing to give away money, because that solves problems for them, CPS has a different focus.

- Some WF workers feel that the perception is that CPS workers are better because they have the flexible hours and the higher pay. How can we get rid of this resentment?
 - One person said that if she goes to the workers personally, instead of sending emails, then they establish a personal relationship. This leads to more knowledge being shared, more of an understanding of each other's roles, and therefore less resentment.
 - CPS has invited them to their weekly staffings.
- Administrators need to invest the time for their staff to get to know each other on a personal level.
- One county has both at the CFTs – started because there are siblings that work in the agency, one in WF and one in CPS, and they made the connection and it has spread.
- Holly asked but no one here seemed to have a problem with confidentiality in feeling like they are not allowed to share information with each other.
- Emily made another comment about culture. On the CPS side the perception is that WF just looks at eligibility issue and getting the family to work in as short a time as possible. WF thinks CPS looks only at child safety and wants to do this and get out as fast as possible, and they don't care if the family works or not. These are obviously intertwined, and it is a shame that the perceptions are that there is such a single minded focus on each side.
 - This probably was a little more true before MRS. Think that MRS has helped each side actually think in a more global way, but the perception is still there.

Service Agreements and Mutual Responsibility Agreements – do these match?

WF/CPS don't have that many cases in common, but when we do, what do people do to ensure that those things match?

- The plans look similar and we need to ensure that we (as an agency) do not present conflicting plans to the family.
- Having WF and CPS at the CFTs enables you to do this.
- Do you invite WF to CFTs where the family is not already open in WF?
 - Some counties do, and it is usually helpful, even if the family is not eligible for WF but there are other services that they may be eligible for that CPS workers are not aware of.
 - In the focus groups Nicole heard that CPS workers would like a brief overview of the services that are available so that they could do some preliminary screening of clients before they involve a WF person.
 - WF says often they have tried that but they realize that CPS has their own job to do, and they can't keep all this straight. But they are ok if you just talk to them and give them a brief synopsis of the family and their situation and generally the WF worker can tell you then if there is something that they may qualify for.

Prevention

First visits – when assessment workers go out on an initial assessment and they see poverty issues, do they call a WF worker immediately to get them involved?

- Emily said that there are so many requirements for WF that it has resulted in clients being on it one month and off the next month, so if a CPS worker only links with WF for 'active' WF cases, they may miss someone because they are not getting a check this month, but they might have last month, and may be back on track next month, so you are missing a large group of families if you only involve WF for active cases.

The state would like to see WF be the primary avenue of prevention – these are trained social workers. What is working to get you to use them as a prevention tool?

- One county has a prevention worker who carries cases that are not open in WF. Her position is paid for by the 200% funds.

What are the barriers to getting this where you would like it to be?

- WF being able to come to a CFT or something where there is not an open case, (because there is no associated client it is not currently billable).
- Some counties have been using WF as collaterals even before MRS.
- Believe that a barrier is still sharing information - not necessarily the confidentiality issues but cases where children are removed from the home, and it's a WF family, but WF was never told.
- If you want to evaluate if your collaboration is good or not, pull a record for a common family. Look at the WF documentation and the CPS collaboration – see what overlaps you have.
- On a scale of 1 –10 (1 = no collaboration, 10 = joint case plan, CFTs, etc.) where would the counties in this room rate themselves?
 - 4 = some workers are good, some could use improvement
 - 4 = one of their WF workers worked in CPS before, so that helps.
 - 3, 5
 - 4 = their agency doesn't have seasoned SW, they don't talk to anyone, not just WF, they are so busy trying to process their own requirements.
 - 6 = personal connections between some CPS and WF workers
 - 6 or 7 = improved a lot based on a Child Support Situation. Management was upset about the way something was handled, and now management made a commitment to attend meetings etc. which results in better results at the worker level.
- Often times we spend so much time working on partnerships in the community that we miss the boat when it comes to our own agency.
- You can't change the world, but you can do your own piece. Sometimes it is helpful if it comes from the top down, but sometimes the best way is a one-to-one relationship between two workers, one from each side of the agency.

How do your workers know about the other program?

- Guilford had a joint breakfast (trying to do quarterly) shared what they did from both sides. Think that they need to keep it up. There is a lot going on so something that someone didn't pick up on the first time they might at a later date. This will also capture new workers.
- Some people do something at orientation and that is good but keep in mind that new employees are being bombarded with information at the beginning – so this is a good taste, but have to follow it up when the worker's head is not spinning from information overload.

- Mecklenburg had a meeting with multiple geo-districts where they shared CPS/WF information
- Periodic larger staff meetings where different sections do presentations.
- Have workshop/trainings where they cross train each others
- At the MRS Institute there is a CPS 101 for WF workers which is always full to capacity, but they also offer WF 101 for CPS workers and this is not well attended.
- Can't just talk about what each type of worker does, they have to actually do the case plan together. This helps with a perspective about what each section of the agency does. (Helps to decrease resentment when you see a CPS worker come in late when you find out they did an emergency removal at 2am the night before.)
- Think it needs to come from the top down. But, what if it doesn't? Then you have to take personal responsibility and collaborate on a personal level.
- Have more WF workers come to the meetings. Have each CPS person that comes to this meeting invite a WF person.
 - Holly acknowledges that more WF workers used to come to the meetings but felt like there was almost a total focus on CPS so they have stopped coming. She asked how she could make the meetings more relevant to WF people while still knowing that there are CPS issues that will need to be discussed. But that does not mean that the WF input is not valid.
 - Emily suggested that all WF not come to each meeting but maybe they could rotate so there were always at least a few of them present.
- Ask WF what role they can play in each part of CPS – Holly may not know either, but if WF workers are here at the meetings they can usually share something that she did not know.
- Each person needs to look at themselves and determine if we are honestly valuing taking the time to do this investment. Are we willing to collaborate with people in our own agency, and invest some time up front for the better outcomes for our families? These better outcomes will also result in less work in the long run for CPS workers. Getting the family financially stable allows them to work on their safety issues, and close a case faster, and not return as a repeat report.
- Blended WF workers, eligibility and benefits. This is a lot of work on one person, but they know their clients better.
- Counties here were not always blended (WF workers) and there are positives and negatives.

Ideas for future meetings

- DV – Crystal Williams or Angela Holloway – policy and practice
- Training – someone from staff development to talk about what trainings are required and let counties talk to them about their needs.

Future Meetings:

August: No Meetings due to the Institute

Central:

September Guilford DSS 25th

October – Alamance Agricultural Ext. 17th

November – Rowan Co Library 27th

Western:

Remainder of Western meetings at AB Tech

September - Friday 21st

October - Wednesday 31st

November - Friday 30th

Eastern:

September - New Hanover DSS 26th

October – Wilson Co DSS 25th

November – Hertford Co 28th